



# MY LIFE, MY STORY

## PATRICIA



**UNITED STATES ARMY**

**1964-1967**



# Moving Forward

## Patricia

I was born in Jacksonville, Florida. My dad was a Navy man and my mom stayed at home. I had two siblings and I was the middle child. We were mainly raised by Mama. She was my maternal grandmother, but she was never really a grandmother. She was Mama. We also stayed with lots of relatives. With my dad in the Navy, I went to different schools, had different friends. I always felt like my life was separate from those not in the military. I spent a lot of time at The Post. There was bowling and dancing; it was different then. It was good. My favorite post was in Newport, Rhode Island. The high school I attended was Davis Jr. High. I used to love going to the school games.



Growing up, I was shy. I sung in the church chorus. My favorite hobby was dancing. I loved to dance. I wanted to be a ballerina, but couldn't take ballet classes. Instead, I would go to the library and learn the steps from reading books on ballet. I also did tap and African dance. I'm not sure which post we were at but I remember my mother accused me of something, so I left and headed to Boston. I stayed with my aunt. My very first job was in a factory putting together Christmas lights. I remember the other workers laughing at me cause I would always say "yes, ma'am" or "no, sir" to everybody. I also worked in a store as an elevator operator. My job was to know all the stores on each floor and call out the names when we would arrive on each floor.

I wanted to originally sign up for the Navy but my dad wouldn't sign my papers to join. I then chose the Army. I served three years in El Paso, Texas and did eight years of the reserve in Boston. My MOS was as a medic in a hospital ward.

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I would take care of the Vietnam Veterans who were in bad shape. I felt like I was a nurse even though I wasn't one. There was a lot of prejudice during my military time. My C.O. wouldn't let us off the base to run errands, like buying new shoes. She would ask for our shoe



size -any of her soldiers that were people of color- and have someone else pick them up. She tried to protect us, I guess, by not letting us off the base.

I loved working alongside the men though. I was smart. I would always make sure that when we would do drills, I was right behind them. We would run and I would run fast enough to be at least behind the last of the men. I would get recognition for being the first woman to complete those drills. I became pregnant when I was stationed in El Paso. You weren't supposed to be pregnant when on active duty. I



tried covering it up by wearing big clothing. I was seven months pregnant when I was finally found out. I was honorably discharged and took a Greyhound from El Paso to Boston. I should have taken a plane or a train; it was a long bus ride and my legs were swollen when I finally got off it!

When I was in the reserves, I was a receptionist and as a civilian, I wanted to be a bus driver but as a woman, I wasn't allowed to. And as for being a female Veteran, if you needed a hospital stay you would be sent to a civilian hospital. JP didn't have a place for female Veterans. The VA would pay for it but it was still different than it was today. I have two children, and they are two

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years apart. I had three grandchildren, but one died at 21 after getting hit by a police car. I also have three great grandchildren. Most of the family lives in Boston and I see them more often now than I did when I was well.

I suppose I had two significant others in my life and my children's father was one of them. I never got married. I spent most of my time raising my kids. I did it by myself and it wasn't easy, but I did what I had to do to take care of them. They grew up and had children of their own. My son even went into the Army and was placed in Germany.

I'm most proud of my great-grandson. He is my heart. He's 16 years old now. I want to get him a camera for Christmas; not an Iphone camera, but an actual camera. His father used a camera growing up so he should know how to use it!



If I were to live my life over again I would not be pregnant in the service. I didn't know you could go back into the service after being pregnant. Mothers do it all the time now. Dads stay home to take care of the kids sometimes while mothers go back to work. I wish I had done that. However, if I were to live my life over again I would not change my kids. I would raise them and protect them. That I would keep the same.

I want my medical team to know that it has not been easy transitioning to living here at Brockton. I used to have my own one-bedroom apartment and now I'm living in one room. It's been hard to grasp, my situation, but I'm adjusting. **As for advice? I would like to say to never take things for granted. Life can change in an instant. Enjoy what you have.**